

Virginia's fallen honored at Memorial Day Ceremony

Virginians from all branches of the military who gave their lives in service to the United States of America were remembered May 28, 2018, at the Commonwealth's Memorial Day Ceremony at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Virginia. Ten Virginia National Guard Soldiers have been killed by hostile enemy action since Sept. 11, 2001, and they are among the more than 300 Virginians remembered on the Wall of Honor at the Memorial.

Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, and his wife Cheryl placed the Virginia National Guard wreath at the Eternal Flame in the Shrine of Memory honoring the Virginia National Guard. Virginia Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax and Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Carlos Hopkins placed the Commonwealth of Virginia wreath.

"Each of us should remember, recognize and honor the ultimate sacrifice made by fallen Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen," Williams wrote in his Memorial Day message. "This is a chance for us to remember their lives, their courage, and their service, as well as a time for each of us who wears the cloth of our country to reaffirm our commitment to selfless service."

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/05/28/11441/>



Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams and his wife Cheryl place the Virginia National Guard wreath at the Eternal Flame in the Shrine of Memory honoring the Virginia National Guard May 28, 2018, at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Virginia.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Virginia NCO, Maryland Soldier named best warriors in the region

Spc. Gerald Villamar, of the Maryland National Guard, and Sgt. Jake Moyer, of the Virginia National Guard, were announced as the top Soldier and NCO of Region II May 20, 2018, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/05/22/11431/>

Contracting Team conduct training exercise at Fort Belvoir

Ten Va. National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 1940th and 1945th Contingency Contracting Teams, 329th Regional Support Group conducted a multi-component contract support training event May 1-11, 2018, at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/05/15/11480/>

Virginia Department of Military Affairs honors, recognizes state employees

Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams and Walter L. Mercer recognized and thanked DMA employees at two State Employee Recognition luncheons May 10, 2018, at Fort Pickett and May 23, 2018, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/05/29/11458/>

Camp Pendleton hosts Southeastern Region Inspector General workshop

More than two dozen National Guard personnel from 12 different states and territories gathered for the Southeastern Region Inspector General workshop May 21-24, 2018, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/05/30/11465/>

Did You Know?

Registration Open for 2018 Virginia National Guard Youth Camp

The Annual Virginia National Guard Youth Camp has opened registration for the 2018 summer session to be held July 22-27, 2018, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The Youth Camp targets 8-12 year old dependents of current National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from around Virginia. This 6-day, overnight camp has a broad range of educational, team-oriented and resilience building activities designed to foster growth and community in the National Guard. As a part of the theme this year, campers will learn about heroes at home and in our world.

For more information, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xQ4bj>.

West Virginia, Virginia Soldiers ride to cycle out sexual assault

Five National Guard Soldiers rode their bicycles 350 miles from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Washington, D.C., all to cycle out sexual assault. The Soldiers, from the West Virginia and Virginia National Guard, rode May 9-13, 2018, battling rain storms, mud pits and scorching temperatures to show sexual assault survivors that they're not alone, to bring awareness to the sexual assault and harassment prevention programs within our military and to show that sexual assault will not be tolerated.

West Virginia National Guardsman Sgt. 1st Class Mike Cochran created the event. He's worked as a state trooper in West Virginia and has served as a trainer for the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program and as a victim advocate. He's also a survivor.

"Whenever I do my trainings, I've gotten pretty comfortable talking about being molested when I was a kid," Cochran said. He explained that telling his own story has helped him heal, but that it's also helped others. "The first time I talked about it, I had someone come up to me and say, 'Hey man, I need to talk to you. The same thing happened to me.' This was a guy who had never told anyone before and he said, 'Because you said that, I feel like I can finally get this off my chest.'"

That experience prompted Cochran to continue sharing his story. "Almost every time, without fail, a guy would come up and tell me that this happened to him when he was a kid and I thought maybe I was on to something so I've been pretty open about it," he said. "Being a man who has done the kinds of things I've done, if I get up and talk to them and if I can get up and do that without being too upset about it and the more I hang it out there, the easier it gets and the easier it is for people to come and talk to me and that's why I do it."

The idea of the ride came two years ago,. Cochran did a shorter ride, from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Maryland, and started talking to his wife about making it an annual event to raise awareness.

"We like to do things that are tough," Cochran said about himself and his fellow Soldiers. In 2017, he planned for the inaugural Cycling Out Sexual Assault Ride, which is when Virginia National Guardsman, Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Brown got involved.

"Both me and Mike were at a SHARP event and he was talking to me about it," Brown said. An injury kept him from riding last year, but he was determined to participate this year. "I jumped in with both feet."

Brown has served as victim's advocate for five years and has his own experience with sexual assault.

"I had a family member be a victim of sexual assault and so this is personal for me," Brown said. "I know how traumatic it can be for a family and for my military family. And it doesn't just happen in the military, it happens everywhere and we're trying to let everyone know that's wrong and that we care and that it won't be tolerated."

Joining Cochran and Brown on the ride were retired Command Sgt. Maj. Harvey Kerstetter and his son, Staff Sgt. David



Five National Guard Soldiers from Virginia and West Virginia finish their five-day, 350-mile bike ride to cycle out sexual assault May 13, 2018, in Washington, D.C.

Kerstetter, and Sgt. 1st Class David Casteel. They rode 60-70 miles each day, first along the Great Allegheny Passage and then along the 184.5 mile towpath within the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park.

"It's life-changing," Brown said. "We went up into the Allegheny Mountains and just knowing that we could ride over a mountain was huge."

The five men finished their ride at the Lincoln Memorial, each clad in a teal t-shirt emblazoned with the message, "Protecting our People Protects our Mission."

He wants to expand the ride next year and plans to invite SHARP representatives from all 54 states and territories to participate.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/05/30/11473/>

MORE ON THE WEB

Enlisted IT expert takes lead at Cyber Shield 18

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/05/24/11438/>

Photos: VDF supports Memorial Day Ceremony

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157667475968167/>

Photos: Soldiers, Airmen compete in state rifle match

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157696851015344/>

Photos: 34th CST conducts external evaluation

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157696640386024/>

Photos: Virginia recognizes newest graduates of WOCS

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